

## Message Text

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ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 EUR-25 IO-12 DPW-01 AID-20 OMB-01

CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-09 H-02 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10

PA-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 SS-14 USIA-12 RSR-01 /140 W

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R 020426 Z APR 73

FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9469

INFO USDEL JEC PARIS

C O N F I D E N T I A L SAIGON 5370

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT PINS MILI VS

SUBJECT: WEEKLY MR III SITREP-26 MARCH TO 1 APRIL 1973

FOLLOWING SENT ACTION SAIGON FROM BIEN HOA APR 1  
REPEATED FOR YOUR INFO

QUOTE BIEN HOA 0048

1. COMBAT OCCUPIED THE MAIN ARENA IN MR III THIS WEEK. VC/NVA PRESSURE MOUNTED ON THE ARVN RANGER BASE CAMP AT TONLE CHAM, BUT EASED SOMEWHAT AT RACH BAP. HEAVY CONTACT ALONG LTL 2 IN PHUOC TUY HAD EASED BY WEEK'S END, BUT SIGNIFICANT COMMUNIST GROUND PROBES AND ABFS CONTINUED THROUGHOUT MR III. VC/NVA FORCES HAVE INCREASED THE OCCASIONAL INTERDICTION OF ROADS AND HIGHWAYS IN PHUOC LONG, BINH DUONG, BIEN HOA AND ELSEWHERE IN MR III, AND VC/NVA MILITARY BUILDUPS ARE REPORTED IN PHUOC LONG, NORTHERN TAY NINH AND BINH LONG.

2. III CORPS CG LTG MINH HAS RESPONDED TO THESE ALARMS AND DIVERSIONS BY PLACING FORCES AT HIS DISPOSAL ON ALERT FOR A POSSIBLE COMMUNIST OFFENSIVE. MINH BELIEVES THE LIKELIEST MOMENT FOR A COMMUNIST OFFENSIVE IS DURING PRESIDENT THIEU'S U. S. VISIT; THE COMMUNISTS, IF THEY ARE GOING TO ATTACK AT ALL, MUST SURELY STRIKE BEFORE THE ONSET OF THE MONSOON IN MR III IN MAY. ALTHOUGH HE EXPECTS AN ATTACK, HE DOES NOT FEAR  
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IT; HE IS QUITE CONFIDENT HIS FORCES CAN DEAL WITH THE SITUATION, EXPECIALLY IN LIGHT OF THE EXCELLENT SHOWING OF THE RF AND THE RANGERS AT RACH BAP AND TONLE CHAM. A " NO SWEAT" ATTITUDE PREVAILS AT MR III HQ.

3. AS HAPPENS SO OFTEN IN VIET- NAM, HOWEVER, THERE IS MORE THAN ONE THEORY WHICH CAN ACCOUNT FOR ALL THE OBSERVED FACTS. MANY REPORTS WE HAVE RECEIVED ASCRIBE COMMUNIST MOVEMENTS TO PREPARATIONS FOR A NEW OFFENSIVE, BUT SOME OBSERVERS DISCOUNT THESE REPORTS, OPINING THAT THE VC/ NVA ARE MOVING ACROSS THE BORDER INTO SOUTH VIET- NAM ONLY TO ESCAPE USAF AIR STRIKES, INCLUDING B-52' S, IN CAMBODIA. OTHERS SAY THE COMMUNISTS ARE ONLY BEEFING UP THEIR FORCES TO DEFEND THE TERRITORY THEY ALREADY HOLD AGAINST A NEWLY AGGRESSIVE ARVN, SOME OF WHOSE GENERALS DESCRIBE THE COMMUNIST HOLD ON AREAS LIKE LOC NINH AND BO DUC AS " ONLY TEMPORARY" AND THREATEN TO RETAKE IT ALL.

4. PART OF THIS EFFORT TO DEFEND THEIR TERRITORY, ACCORDING TO SOME REPORTS, INCLUDES THE REDUCTION, NEUTRALIZATION, AND EVENTUAL ELIMINATION OF RVN- CONTROLLED POCKETS AND SALIENTS, SUCH AS SONG BE, AN LOC, AND TONLE CHAM. ACCORDING TO REPORTS WE HAVE SEEN, THE EVENTS AT TONLE CHAM WERE NOT ONE- SIDED; THE COMMUNIST ATTACKS THERE BEGAN ONLY AFTER THE VC/ NVA FORCES AND SUPPLY TRAINS MOVING THROUGH THE AREA SUFFERED HEAVY LOSSES FROM ARVN ARTILLERY AND VNAF AIR STRIKES CALLED IN BY TONLE CHAM- BASED RANGER PATROLS. THE DISCUSSION COMES FULL CIRCLE WHEN ARVN III CORPS OFFICERS CLAIM THAT VC/ NVA MOVEMENT THROUGH THE TONLE CHAM AREA IS IN PREPARATION FOR A NEW OFFENSIVE, THEREFORE ARVN STRIKES AGAINST SUCH COLUMNS ARE PURELY DEFENSIVE.

5. WHILE PREPARING TO FIGHT IF THE COMMUNISTS LAUNCH NEW ATTACKS, LTG MINH IS ALSO READY TO TALK. HE HAS SOUGHT APPROVAL FROM SAIGON TO MEET WITH PRG LTG TRA, AND TO AUTHORIZE HIS DIVISION COMMANDERS TO TALK WITH THEIR COUNTERPARTS. CONTACTS AT LOWER LEVELS ARE STILL NOT AUTHORIZED.

6. THE VC CONTINUE TO BUILD HAMLETS IN AREAS UNDER THEIR CONTROL AND TRY, WITH SOME SUCCESS, TO LURE PEOPLE INTO THEIR AREAS WITH OFFERS OF 3 HECTACRES AND A FREE HOUSE. THE COMMUNISTS HAVE ALSO USED FORCE , ROUNDING UP A " RENT A POPULATION" IN TAY NINH TO PEOPLE AN AREA SCHEDULED FOR AN ICCS VISIT ( THE ICCS DIDN' T SHOW)

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7. IN THE POLITICAL ARENA, THE RVN IS SHOWING SIGNS OF SOME GENUINE ASSAULTS ON CORRUPTION. EARLY EFFORTS, HOWEVER, ARE TOO TENUOUS TO SUPPORT A JUDGEMENT AS TO HOW SERIOUS RVN IS THIS TIME.

8. POLITICAL POLLING BY THE RD CADRE SHOWS OVER 95 PER CENT OF THE POPULATION PRO- THIEU; THE ESTIMATES OF CONGEN POLITICAL REPORTERS ARE CLOSER TO 80-20 IN A 2 - WAY RACE BETWEEN THIEU AND THE CNTOU I TS, AND 50-30-20 IN A 3- WAY RACE ( THIEU VERSUS A THIRD FORCE VERSUS THE COMMUNISTS). SHOWING SOME SGN HOSTILITY TO POSSIBLE THIRD FORCE CONTENDERS, AN AN QUANG DELEGATION TO BINH TUY PROVINCE WAS HARASSED BY RVN DISTRICT- LEVEL OFFICIALS.

9. ECONOMIC DISCONTENT CONTINUES TO PLAGUE THE RVN IN MR III, PARTICULARLY INFLATION, UN- AND UNDEREMPLOYMENT. RVN POLITICAL STRUGGLE COMMITTEES REPORT AHT THE MOST HOSTILE QUESTIONS THEY RECEIVE AT THEIR VILLAGE- LEVEL EXPOSITIONS ON THE PARIS AGREEMENT AND RVN POLICY ARE ON ECONOMIC ISSUES.

10. THE REGION V ICCS TEAMS THIS WEEK HAVE A TOTAL OF 15 INVESTIGATIONS UNDERWAY. WITH THE LESSENING OF RVN SUSPICIONS, ICCS PERSONNEL NOW HAVE GREATER FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT, BUT THE POLES AND HUNGARIANS HAVE SHOWN GREATER RELUCTANCE TO MOVE. THE BEN CAT POLDEL HAS RETURNED TO BIEN HOA, AND UNANIMITY IN ICCS FINDINGS ON EVEN THE MOST BLATANT CEASE- FIRE VIOLATIONS IS NOWHERE IN SIGHT.

11. THE POLES AND HUNGARIANS THIS WEEK APPARENTLY MADE THE STARTLING DISCOVERY THAT IT WAS NOT NECESSARY FOR BOTH OF THEM TO BE OBSTRUCTIVE TO PREVENT THE ICCS FROM FUNCTIONING. A 3-1 VOTE IS NOW MORE UNANIMOUS THAN A 2-2 VOTE; THE HUNGARIANS THEREFORE SIDED WITH CANADA AND INDONESIA IN A REPORT ON THE VC POWS WHO REFUSED REPATRIATION AT BIEN HOA AIR BASE THIS WEEK ( THE HUNGARIANS ARE THE ONES WITHOUT MOST FAVORED NATION STATUS.)

12. FURTHER DELAYS HAVE DEVELOPED IN ICCS DEPLOYMENT TO THE SUB- REGIONAL SITES AT AN LOC AND XA MAT, AND THE ICCS REGION V HEADQUARTERS IS SEEKING AUTHORITY FROM ICCS IN SAIGON TO INITIATE INVESTIGATIONS WITHOUT PRIOR APPROVAL FROM ICCS SAIGON. THIS LATTER MOVE CAN ONLY BE A STEP FORWARD, ESPECIALLY IN LIGHT OF THE NEED TO INVESTIGATE INCIDENTS BEFORE THE EVIDENCE IS DISTURBED. SIGNED WALKINSHAW UNQUOTE  
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\*\*\* Current Handling Restrictions \*\*\* n/a

\*\*\* Current Classification \*\*\* CONFIDENTIAL

## Message Attributes

**Automatic Decaptioning:** X  
**Capture Date:** 01 JAN 1994  
**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
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**Draft Date:** 02 APR 1973  
**Decaption Date:** 01 JAN 1960  
**Decaption Note:**  
**Disposition Action:** RELEASED  
**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
**Disposition Authority:** garlanwa  
**Disposition Case Number:** n/a  
**Disposition Comment:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
**Disposition Date:** 28 MAY 2004  
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**Disposition History:** n/a  
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**Review Authority:** garlanwa  
**Review Comment:** n/a  
**Review Content Flags:**  
**Review Date:** 15 AUG 2001  
**Review Event:**  
**Review Exemptions:** n/a  
**Review History:** RELEASED <15-Aug-2001 by shawdg>; APPROVED <16-Nov-2001 by garlanwa>  
**Review Markings:**

Declassified/Released  
US Department of State  
EO Systematic Review  
30 JUN 2005

**Review Media Identifier:**  
**Review Referrals:** n/a  
**Review Release Date:** n/a  
**Review Release Event:** n/a  
**Review Transfer Date:**  
**Review Withdrawn Fields:** n/a  
**Secure:** OPEN  
**Status:** <DBA CORRECTED> gwr 971114  
**Subject:** WEEKLY MR III SITREP-26 MARCH TO 1 APRIL 1973 FOLLOWING SENT ACTION SAIGON FROM BIEN HOA APR 1 REPEATED FOR YOUR INFO QUOTE BIEN HOA 0048  
**TAGS:** MILI, PINS, PINT, VS  
**To:** EA  
JEC PARIS  
SECSTATE WASHDC  
**Type:** TE  
**Markings:** Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005